

building operatives of this country has been, and we sincerely hope will be, progressive. Mr. Macaulay shows us that in the seventeenth century the ordinary pay of a skilled workman was 6s. to 7s. per week, whilst the ordinary pay of a labourer was 4s. per week; and on referring to the table of the prices of wheat, given by Adam Smith, it is seen that during the Commonwealth and subsequently, a workman must have paid about as much for his bread as he now pays, while he received rather less than one quarter of his present wages. "If we even look back," says Mr. Smirke, in an interesting paper on this subject, printed in our pages, "to so recent a period as the year 1800, I have it on excellent living testimony, that the wages of a good mason in London were only 10s. per week, who now receives from 30s. to 33s. In the year 1800 wheat was, on an average of five years, as appears by the tables given in 'Tooke's History of Prices,' 90s. 6d. per quarter; and indeed during a year of great scarcity about that period the quarterly loaf, for which we now pay 7d. or 8d., cost 1s. 10d."

God forbid it should be inferred for a moment, from what we have said, that we would not gladly see these wages more, if time and circumstance justified the increase. Our object in drawing attention to these facts is to show that the position of building operatives is hopeful, and to lead them to reflect before taking any steps which might tend to injure it. There are no men more eminently worthy of their hire, and none more entitled to support in a right course. We may say in conclusion, that we have visited the tavern in Drury-lane on more than one evening since the committee of workmen have been sitting there: groups of men were lounging about the street; every room in the house was full; and what we saw was not calculated to lessen the earnestness with which we treat workmen and masters to avoid strikes, which never have been and never will be productive of good results. We ask from masters kind consideration for those who are engaged under them; but we must at the same time ask from workmen candid consideration for those by whom they are employed.

THE QUESTION OF A GOTHIC DOME.

WHY may we not have a Gothic dome? Many a reader of these lines will look at the question with incredulity as to the seriousness of the writer; while among the devotees of mediævalism—that numerous and enthusiastic priesthood who now burn perpetual incense at its shrine—he will probably meet with no other sympathy than pity for his derangement. But the question is, indeed, submitted in all seriousness. Why may we not have a Gothic dome?

The admirer of mediæval taste will be obliged to admit that in the matter of the worship of precedent the Gothicists now are worse, rather than better, than the despised Classicists of the last generation. Probably our Gothic architects are never to be found actually reproducing in detail a building of the ancient, as the Greek and Roman school felt bound to do, or in common practice copying mouldings from the books as if they were drawing for a schoolmaster's prize; but there is displayed to the full the same reluctance to revert to fundamental principles, and the same disposition to follow routine, to keep within the rules, to keep clear of error, like a little boy at his book. And it is safe to assert that in this the modern Goth is less excusable than the modern Greek, in so far that there can

never be set up for the mediæval remains anything like that claim upon the sympathies of the refined poet or profound scholar, which could never be denied to the relics of an age from whose ruins all that is excellent in modern taste and learning first arose. And, further, inasmuch as there are now-a-days a somewhat numerous class of romantic theorists and archæological amateurs who dictate rules of architectural practice with anathemas and other sublimated weapons in their hands, and inasmuch as the chief of our mediævalist practitioners govern themselves, it is to be feared, much more by the dogmas of such masters, than by the results of their own research; therefore, surely precedent-worship such as this shows even less of common manliness than that of the now old-fashioned, but always elegant, elevating, and poetic formalism of those who had acquired their taste from the severe and majestic model of the youthful world. Yes, indeed, despite of all the many points where they excel, the fact must be deplored that the dogmatism of the present school is much worse than that which it has overthrown. The dogmatism of the Classicists was never less, at the worst, than the philosophical persuasion of educated minds that in the ancient world there appeared a profound divinity of genius now unapproachable. The dogmatism of the Gothicists is never more, at the best, than a romantic devotion, frequently repugnant to the educated mind,—a merely archæological mania, where no divinity of genius comes into the question at all. The one was a noble hero-worship, which left the vulgar in amazement; the other is too much what we do not care to name, which leaves in equal wonder the refined and elevated. The contrast,—the immeasurable gap, is that which lies between Solon, or Socrates, or the Stagyræ, and a miracle-mongering bishop; Pericles the Grand and a half-naked, half-witted, pig-headed baron, who could not write his name; the breathing marbles of Attica or Augustan Rome and the miserable effigy of a rude knight templar or an ascetic monk; the divinity of the soul and the earth for ever earthy. Despite the merits, which every one ought fully and proudly to grant, of very many of the present school, such is the melancholy truth. And a pity it is that our noble art should be so pursued by prejudice,—casting off the yoke of one, only to become the speedy victim of another.

Now, what would be the answer of a mediævalist to our question as to why we may not think of a Gothic dome? He would probably refer us to the examples at once, as the quickest way to conquer; or, at the best, he would enter upon some theory of Gothic principles, which would ultimately revert to the same idea, that in the authentic works of the period alone are we to find the system of the style. And what is such an argument? That mere reluctance to revert to the fundamental, which is so much a failing of human nature,—that indolence or incapacity, or both, which keeps this old world of ours joggling on so imperceptibly in its old way, among all manner of inconveniences, imperfections, impediments; when these, as many a man mourns to see, could so easily and so quickly be remedied for ever, if the lazy, stupid old world would only shake itself, and think for a moment.

We will not, therefore, be content with any such argument: we must have something more logical than the best of mere precedent and authenticity and romance.

Who that has gazed from a distance at St. Paul's in London, can have failed to admire that grand and majestic *chef d'œuvre* of our art? That dome,—so serene in its magnitude and loftiness,—so exquisitely graceful, too, in its stupendous form,—a wonder of the world it stands, as it lifts its beautiful majesty into the silent heaven, calm and triumphant like an archangel! No mere tower that ever fancy planned—no spire, however gracefully it penetrates the sky—seems to possess a title of the grandeur of that pompous crown; for like the crown it is of the great empire of the seas! Around it the towers and spires—each one itself a princely form—stand

like a hundred waiting men: its imperial erect looks down upon the mighty House of Industry afar, prostrate like a colossus in homage; while our gay young palace of the river half hides herself behind the old bridge as she slowly rears one arm of beauty and another to do her utmost—all in vain—to vie with that calm passive queen.

Why might not the new Palace of Westminster complete its toilet with such a crown? Because there is no precedent for it: precedent ordains towers and spires, but nothing else; and it matters little whether the idea of a tower in a dozen stories is at all appropriate in a house of the British Legislature, where there is not even a muezzin to call the members to prayers: it matters little that the scattered masses against the sky seem to call to each other, whether in the sunlight or against the moon for some mighty chief in their midst to gather them together in that union which is strength, and whose absence is weakness: there is no precedent for aught else, and there's an end on't.

A dome is meaningless unless it be on a large scale. Small as the domes of Greenwich Hospital are, and poor and paltry, as well as small as those of the London University, the National Gallery, and Bethlehem Hospital are, there is something grand in the form of a dome to which no grandeur of a mere tower or spire can approach. But a dome ought to be on a large scale—the vaulted roof of a stupendous hall on the ground,—in proportion with the entire altitude of the edifice: this is the idea of the form, and if there is still grandeur in a diminutive cupola only in proportion with an upper story, or as the lantern in the ceiling of an apartment of the building, it is but a proof of how impressive in its nature is the form when even the mimicry of it is impressive.

And seriously, the idea has not seldom occurred to the mind of the writer, of late, as he has taken his daily way into Westminster, that a dome is precisely what that structure, so beautiful and graceful in its detail, but so deficient in the majesty which its unexampled cost and magnitude ought to afford, demands as a powerful and appropriate climax and focus of effect, and that those two tall isolated, unsupported, staggering, towers in the rear, however fine in their individuality and detail, and however much in accordance with precedent form precisely the most effectual means for distracting the unity of the structure, dismembering it, shooting it off, as it were, in opposite directions away into the void, out of the picture.

Now, supposing it were definitively ordered that a dome should be superadded to the Houses of Parliament, and supposing the task of its design fell into the hands, not of any such architect as the able master who conducts that work, but of one of the main body of our profession, how would he proceed? The day is now gone by, although it is not far in the distance, when he would have taken one of Batty Langley's five orders of Gothic columns for his peristyle, with architrave, frieze, and cornice, all according to rule, and a balustrade of Tudor archings on the top; but it is to be feared that there are few among us, even yet, who would commence, as we ought, at the fundamental germ of the idea, and build up a conception step by step from the beginning to the perfect end—from the foundation to the summit. If our architect were to cut the matter short by perching the dome of St. Paul's in the centre, divesting it of its dress and decoration, and then reclothing the naked form in the new fashion, it is pretty much what his best friends would look for at the least. Nine out of ten among us would do so:—we would think of nothing else than to take a regulation dome, alter its style of structural appearance, and overlay it with the standard details of Gothic decoration. But this would never be a Gothic dome by any means. It would be only a monument of the fallacy of precedent, professing to dispense with thought and even with education, and invariably leading to confusion and mistake in the application of the results of one idea in the circumstances of another.